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ABSTRACT

Indochinese children entering American schools face many problems in learning the content area subjects. The problems include the tremendous linguistic barrier, differences in American and Indochinese educational practices, values, expectations, and patterns of thinking, and misplacement in American schools based on the age of Indochinese students. In addition, Indochinese students must adjust to a new culture, and may also face social and economic disadvantage. The key role in teaching the content areas to students is played by the teacher. Possible solutions to the problems the teacher faces include: (1) efforts to understand how cultural differences work and affect learning and teaching; and (2) the use of strategies and/or classroom activities which have been proven to work with foreign-born students, and particularly with Indochinese. These include identifying, and if necessary rewriting, general and specific lesson objectives, identifying key works, preteaching, capitalizing on past learning and experiences, helping students with note-taking, providing individual instruction, using the "buddy" system and strategies to improve reading and vocabulary, evaluating and testing with objectivity, coordinating with other staff members, and soliciting help from parents and the community. (CMG)

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TEACHING THE CONTENT SUBJECTS TO INDOCHINESE STUDENTS

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TEACHING THE CONTENT SUBJECTS TO INDOCHINESE STUDENTS*

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1. Background of Indochinese Students

The sudden influx of students from Indochina to American schools in 1975 created much confusion, frustration, helplessness and concerns on the part of American school administrators and teachers alike. This massive and unexpected influx caught American educators off guard because their training, background and experience did not prepare them to deal with a new student population whose cultures, languages and educations they had rarely heard of, or with which they were unfamiliar. The problem even became more severe because the Indochinese students were not homogeneous in terms of linguistic, cultural and educational background. Among these students the majority came from Vietnam, then Laos and Cambodia, in that order. Within each one of these national groups, there were different ethnic subgroups such as the ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, the Hmong people from Laos, etc. The primary language and culture of the Hmong, for instance, are quite different from those of the Vietnamese, Laotians or Cambodians. Furthermore, educational background and experience varied substantially from the members of the same group or of the subgroups. A number of the Indochinese at school age had never gone to school or had limited education in their native lands. In other words, they were either illiterate or semi-illiterate in their own language.

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The refugees who came to the United States during the first wave (in 1975 or a little bit later) were better educated and sophisticated than the refugees who came during the second wave (from 1977 to the present time). In terms of educational and socio-economic background, the refugees of the first wave tend to be more homogeneous within their subgroups. The majority of them were well-educated and had a rather high socio-economic status back in their homeland. In other words, they were white collar workers from Indochina and had exposure to western civilizations and languages (French & English). In contrast to the refugees of the first wave, the refugees of the second wave were noticeably heterogeneous in terms of ethnic, racial, linguistic and educational background. Among these refugees were the Hmong (tribespeople from Laos), the Laotians, Cambodians and Vietnamese. The majority of these ethnic and national groups were the Vietnamese who fled their homeland in unseaworthy craft and are known as "the boat people". Also during the second wave, a good number of ethnic Chinese from the three Indochinese countries (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) came to the United States. Generally speaking, and according to all reliable data, the majority of the second wave refugees had only limited or no education. Many of them never went to school in their native country. In fact, they are semi-illiterate or illiterate in their own language. In addition, a substantial number of these refugees knew limited or no English and had limited or no exposures to Western languages and/or ways of life. This research paper is focussed on the problems facing this population regarding the learning of the content subjects

at American schools. At the time of the writing of this paper, there are more than 500,000 Indochinese refugees residing in the Unite States. The flow of refugees from Indochina has not stopped yet. These refugees continue to come to the U.S. from refugee camps in Southeast Asia for resettlement and family reunification. What this means is that Indochinese children keep on coming to our schools and they need special help and understanding on the part of American educators for their education.

II. PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING OF THE CONTENT SUBJECTS

In addition to the tremendous linguistic barrier due to an inability to speak, understand, read and write the English language, the cultural and educational differences between the United States and Indochina create a host of difficulties for our Indochinese students, especially when it comes to the learning of the content subjects. The fact is that linguistic differences are not the sole culprits; there are many others such as differences in terms of educational practices, learning and teaching styles, values, assumptions, expectations and patterns of thinking, let alone misplacement due to the age and educational backgrounds of Indochinese students. An important number of Indochinese students with limited or no formal education have been placed in higher grade levels in American schools because of their age. This makes their education inappropriate, irrelevant, meaningless and even unequitable. For those students who have been placed in grade level equivalent to the level last achieved in their homeland, the language problem is, generally, a major obstacle to their learning of the content subjects.

This paper is primarily aimed at helping the content subject teacher work effectively with this population. Since the educational systems in Indochina were, generally speaking, modeled after the French system, a knowledge of the latter helps American educators understand not only the differences between the American system and the Indochinese systems but also their educational implications. The author's investigation of the learning of the content subjects by Indochinese students has revealed a number of problems which not only tend to hinder their progress but also frustrate them. These problems are many-fold:

1. The comprehension of the text materials.
2. The language barrier, specifically the understanding of the lessons or readings in English, a language generally considered to be very difficult for Indochinese language speakers.
3. The unfamiliarity of the Indochinese students with the American culture and educational system which strongly influences instruction.
4. The rules and procedures expected in American classrooms are, generally speaking, very different from the students' customs. In addition, since these rules and procedures are explained in either oral or written English, a language the new Indochinese student usually does not understand well, it is obviously difficult for him to follow them.
5. The expectations of the American teacher in terms of academic achievements.

As for learning problems, we can list at least six main sources:

1. STUDENT'S BACKGROUND AND LEVEL

   1.1. The Student's Needs Assessment: is insufficient, inaccurate,

superficial or totally lacking.

1.2. The Student's Limited English Proficiency: Generally speaking, Indochinese students suffer from severely limited English proficiency even though some of them have been in the U.S. for quite a while. This is partly because of their limited or no exposure to the English language. For them the English language has very little or nothing in common with their mother tongue, therefore, English seems to be quite difficult to learn especially in terms of phonology. The typical Indochinese student might understand very little oral English and has little or limited speaking ability. This ability is usually restricted to exchange necessary information or obtain necessities and playground survival. While he might possess some silent reading ability in English, his writing ability is certainly quite restricted. Furthermore, it is very unlikely that his reading ability is at grade level. The fact that he might understand basic commands and "playground" English as well as meanings of individual words in isolation tend to mislead the American educator in terms of his ability to comprehend instructional and abstract concepts. Even if he can read and write fairly well, he is likely to be at a complete loss when confronted with spoken English. For him, trying to talk in the new language can be a totally frustrating experience. Although he often knows what to say or ask, he finds it quite difficult to express himself in English. Not only does his linguistic struggle tend to slow down his pace of learning

and progress but it also might eventually lead to his drop-out.

Some students take classnotes in their native tongue and later have to undertake the tedious task of transcribing or translating the material into English. On the contrary, the American student, after he listens to the teacher, usually understands the subject clearly. If he does not understand it, he can use his native language, which is also the language of the classroom, to ask questions or seek clarification with ease. As for the Indochinese student, the language barrier can be quite frustrating and extremely time consuming. This language barrier deprives him of the above luxury to which his American peer has access. The Indochinese student has to constantly struggle with words, especially those that are technical or not frequently used, and idioms in English that he does not understand. He has to take the whole set of notes home and look them up word by word or idiom by idiom in a bilingual dictionary or glossary and try to figure out their meanings. Even so, there is no guarantee that the appropriate meaning is understood because the meaning of words variesfrom context to context. Last, but not least, he has to put the meanings together to come up with some idea of the subject taught or of what the teacher explained in the classroom.

1.3. Lack of Experience: The Indochinese student is likely inexperienced in self-direction of time, and in self-evaluating and self-explana-

tory materials.

2. MATERIALS

2.1. The chosen texts are above the student's linguistic and intellectual level and/or include too many difficult and abstract terms and concepts. According to one research, over 500 specialized words and phrases are found in 8 sets of mathematics textbooks prepared for Grade I through 3[1]. This kind of problem is even worse in social studies, science and instructional materials written for grades beyond the first three. The following excerpts are excellent illustrations of the problems discussed:

Grade Three Social Studies

"Big cement canals carry water from the dams. Smaller ditches go from the canals to the farmers' fields. There are gates in the ditches. When the farmers need water, they open the gates, and water flows through furrows beside the plants and trees."[2]

Grade Four Science

"As the layers of sedimentary rock are forced upward, they crack. Cracking takes place at the domes and forms ridges. As rain falls on the domes and flows over the ridges, rock is washed away. The different levels of sedimentary rock make up the rock you see in older folded mountains."[3]

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1. Wilmon, Betty. "Reading in the Content Area: A "New Math" Terminology List for the Primary Grades." Elementary English, XLIII, May 1971, pp.463-471

2. Wann, K.D.; Vreeland, J.D.; and Conklin, M.A. Learning About Our Country, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1963, p. 232.

3. Smith, H.A.; Blecha, M.K.; and Sternig, J. Science 4, Laidlaw Brothers Publishers, River Forest, Ill., 1966, p. 116.

Another serious problem is the rapid rate at which new, specialized or abstract words are introduced or taught.

2.2. The teacher uses only one text as the sole resource for students with a wide range of comprehension and reading levels.

2.3. Indochinese students, particularly the newly arrived, are not familiar with American textbooks.

2.4. The home or supplementary assignments are inappropriate because they are beyond the level of the student. Therefore, he/she cannot read or do these assignments independently.

2.5. The text contains numerous acronyms such as UFO, C.O.D., A.M., P.M., MPH, GMT, G.I., GOP, MD, P.O.W., P.E., V.I.P., T.B., R.N., etc. Generally speaking, Indochinese students feel very discouraged and frustrated if they have to spend a lot of time and effort figuring out the full spellings of these acronyms and their meanings.

2.6. Proper names are used figuratively as common terms such as "Chauvinism", "Machiavellism", and "Armageddon" in the sentence "Life is a series of Armageddons", for instance. In order to understand the meanings of these terms, the student is required to have a solid knowledge of history and/or a good dictionary, preferably bilingual.

2.7. Known words are used in unknown ways: River bank, shrinking world, lady bug, to name a few.

2.8. The text contains threatening terms such as "vascular", "circular", "isobar", "protoplasm", etc. Not only does the Indochinese

student find it difficult to "consume" these terms, their pronunciations certainly create serious problems for him.

2.9. The text contains flowery, complicated idioms or sophisticated phrases. For instance:

He passed away

Rumor runs faster than a fire

2.10. The chosen texts are biased culturally and linguistically, especially texts of history related to Asians.[1]

2.11. Generally speaking, Indochinese students are not familiar with objective tests and usually find these tests "strange".

3. PREPARATION AND GUIDANCE

3.1. There is a lack of clarity and sufficient preparation in making reading assignments. Indochinese students need much more preparation on the part of the teacher than American students.

3.2. The purposes of the assignments or teachings are not clearly and/or sufficiently explained. As a consequence, the teacher's expectations are not understood clearly by Indochinese students.

3.3. By and large, Indochinese students do not have sufficient training in the use or interpretation of charts, graphs, maps, symbols and signs.[2] American textbooks often contain abundant graphic materials such as charts, graphs, tables, diagrams and maps of all kinds. Indochinese must familiarize themselves with, and learn how to read, each type of graphics before they are able to

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1. See Stereotypes, Distortions and Omissions in U. S. History Textbooks, The Council on Interracial Books for Children, New York, N.Y., 1977.

2. For further information on these differences, see Getting to Know the Vietnamese and Their Culture by Vuong G. Thuy, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, New York, 1976.

understand its concentrated content. This requires time and effort not only from the students but also from the American teacher. It has been found that the teacher often assumes wrongly that foreign-born students of limited English proficiency are quite familiar with graphic materials commonly found in American textbooks. This assumption might adversely affect the student's learning and progress. Furthermore, the above problem can become quite serious if the same symbols in the Indochinese system have different meanings in the American system. For example:

For Americans: 3-1-1979 = The first of March, 1979

For Indochinese: 3-1-79 = The third of January, 1979

3.4. Indochinese students have been trained in the metric system and the centigrade temperature scale. Therefore, the American measurement and Fahrenheit temperature systems are sources of puzzlement, confusion and frustration for them.

Conversions cannot be made easily and usually require extensive training, computation and a lot of time.

4. CHECK AND FOLLOW-UP

4.1. The check on the student's comprehension of the teacher's explanation or text materials is insufficient, superficial or non-existent.

4.2. There is a lack of follow-up on the student's specific needs as observed during reading or classroom activities.

5. LEARNING AND TEACHING STYLES[1]

5.1. Indochinese students are only familiar with rote learning and may feel uncomfortable, if not bewildered, with the American problem solving or give-and-take approach.

5.2. Indochinese students tend to be more synthetically minded and not as analytically minded, as their American peers.

5.3. They also tend to be more field dependent. In other words, they tend to depend on others for ideas, solutions, learning and achievement etc., without making efforts to create their own ideas, find their own solutions, and achieve learning.

5.4. They may resist or feel quite disturbed with the open discussion approach since they are used to the lecture approach. They may also find the open discussion approach unacceptable because this approach may be viewed as a lack of respect for the teacher who is highly esteemed and respected in their cultures.

5.5. The dynamic and direct behavior observed in American schools is likely to bewilder most Indochinese students.

5.6. Generally speaking, Indochinese students find it hard to understand the hustle, energy and informality of the American teacher. For these students, the aggressiveness, directness and competitive spirits of their American peers are quite threatening and puzzling.

1. For further information, read Getting to Know the Vietnamese and Their Culture by Vuong G. Thuy, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, New York, 1976, pp. 71-74.

6. THE TEACHER

6.1. Some teachers tend to speak in an unclear manner or too fast and slur vowels and sometimes even syllables. On the other hand being aware of the linguistic difficulty facing non-English competent students, some other teachers intentionally speak too slowly at the expense of naturalness, thus sometimes creating comprehension problems, and artificiality in speaking.

6.2. The teacher does not have an accurate understanding of the cultural, educational and linguistic background of the Indochinese student.

6.3. Due to a lack of the above knowledge, the American teacher might assume the background of the Indochinese student to be greater or smaller than it actually is, (linguistic, educational, socio-economic etc.) This might very well result in unfair or unjustified requirements and/or expectations on the part of the American teacher. An assumption of a greater background and capability will likely and unduly overburden the student's learning. In addition, the teacher, in this situation, tends to speak or use the English language in a normal and natural way when dealing with the Indochinese student without taking consideration the latter's language barrier. As a result of this assumption and behavior, the student's learning will become burdensome, frustrating and prone to failure. On the other hand, an assumption of a less background and capability makes his learning experience unchallenging, uninteresting and boring. With this assumption, the American teacher does not tend to use normal English when

speaking to the Indochinese student, and does not encourage his American peers to help him with English. Consequently, the whole process might slow down his pace of progress and learning.

6.3. Last but not least, some teachers tend to take much for granted.

In addition to the academic problems described above, the American teacher should keep in mind that the Indochinese student suffers from a wide range of non-academic difficulties created by his effort to adjust to a new culture and society, by being culturally and linguistically uprooted, and by his social and economic disadvantages etc. A number of these students came to the United States either alone or with siblings, lacking the traditional protection and family comfort which are crucial to their emotional, mental and cognitive development. Their minds are constantly preoccupied by deep worries and concern about the safety and welfare of their beloved ones left behind in their native land. They usually find it difficult to concentrate on their studies. A number of them reportedly have to work as laborers or in menial jobs after school to save money in order to send it home to help their beloved ones. In some cases symptoms of mental health problems such as insommia, constant headache and loss of appetite have been reported among high school refugee students from Indochina. Moreover, frustration at school and feeling of loneliness, self-pity, emptiness and alienation as a result of the "culture shock" prey on these young students from Indochina. Furthermore, even for the student who is living with his refugee parents, his problems are not necessarily less critical. Due to their own struggle for "survival"

in the new and alien society, his parents are no longer able to provide him with the instructional support and/or help that he badly needs for his studies at school. The lack of this traditional support and help at home makes it difficult for him to achieve educational success. Therefore the Indochinese student's problems with the content subjects in American schools are not only multiple but quite complex.

III. Suggested Solutions

Because of the complexity of the cultural and academic factors involving the teaching and learning of the content subjects, any sound approach to these subjects must be conceived from the point of view of both the teacher and the learner. This dual approach will eventually lead to effective teaching and learning strategies which are particularly needed in cross-cultural situations.

Based on the result of the above diagnosis and study, and especially on the discussions with Indochinese students and their American teachers, the author is inclined to suggest a number of approaches to the multifaceted problems of the Indochinese student learning the content subjects in English either as a second or even third language with the hope to achieve effective teaching and learning.

All things being equal, it must be emphasized right away that the Indochinese student, generally speaking, is highly motivated and tends to be quite serious about his education due to the traditional deep-rooted

high esteem for education in his culture, and that the American educator, classroom teacher and administrator alike, plays a key role in educating and helping him overcome his difficulties and obstacles. In order to become effective and affective in educating his new student from Indochina, the American educator must be aware of academic and non-academic factors.

1. CULTURAL FACTORS:

An understanding of how cultural differences work and affect learning and teaching is crucial to successful and effective teaching. Research and practical experience in cross-cultural situations have clearly shown that if cultural differences are not handled properly, they tend to cause conflicts, interferences, interruption, misunderstanding and alienation in American classrooms in which minority students in general and Indochinese students in particular are enrolled. Since most of us tend to take cross-cultural behaviors and minifestations for granted, we are usually unprepared to deal with cross-cultural communication conflicts and problems when they unexpectedly erupt. In terms of effective cross-cultural interactions or encounters in multicultural settings, it is very important for the teacher to understand the process of cross-cultural communication. For the classroom situation, the understanding of this process requires a number of efforts:

1.1. He/she should make an effort to learn about, and understand, the characteristics of, and differences between, the American and

the non-American educational systems including differences in terms of learning and teaching styles, signs and symbols, textbooks etc.

1.2. The educator, teacher and administrator alike, should try to learn about, and understand, the characteristics of, and differences between, all children's cultures and languages, especially those of non-American minority children.

1.3. He/she should pay attention to all children's cultural norms and behaviors in the classroom.

1.4. He/she should try to understand the nature of language and culture in general, and the language and culture in contact in particular. An understanding of how these processes work and their implications will prove to be very helpful.

1.5. He/she should learn to be a good observer sensitive to the cultural and linguistic patterns and behaviors of the students within their own cultural and linguistic settings as well as across cultures.

1.6. He/she should always be alert to, and looking for, signs of possible conflicts or problems such as the student's blank stares, hostile behavior, frustration, a kind of "I-don't-care" attitude and consistent absences. The American educator should also look out for puzzling and misleading behavior on the part of the student. He/she should be watchful for signs or symptoms of homesickness, loneliness, worries, and the student's suddenly becoming remote, reflective and totally non-commital. In such cases the American teacher should not question the student about the reasons for this kind of "strange" behavior, but instead give him additional affection or attention along

with one stimulation or another. This will prove to be quite effective in getting the student back on his educational track.

1.7. The educator should always ask himself or herself if he/she is doing the right thing or behaving properly in cross-cultural situations. He/she should not do anything that he/she is not sure about in these situations, and seek information from knowledgeable people. To avoid mistakes is much better than making mistakes.

1.8 It is quite desirable and sometimes even necessary to provide for a comfortable cultural climate because the abrupt uprooting and hardships on the way to a new land could be quite detrimental to the student's self-concept, cognitive development and mental stability. The teacher should always be ready to help the student understand, enjoy and participate in his "strange" and "threatening" new cultural and educational environment.

1.9 Since cultural misunderstanding or inappropriate behavior tends to interfere with learning, a minimum of cultural interference must be maintained at all time in the multicultural classroom. This requires constant observation, understanding, perception, sensitivity and particularly flexibility.

1.10 Last but not least, the American educator should provide for cultural differences and acceptance of cultural, linguistic and educational disadvantages of students of limited English proficiency in planning, conducting and evaluating instruction. Based on cultural strengths, the teacher can promote activities and/or learning experiences that make the class interested in, respectful and appreciative of,

cultural differences. Furthermore, whenever and wherever appropriate, it is advisable that the teacher express admiration for the student's cultural strengths such as strong familial and cultural heritage. This heritage should be considered to be a valuable asset to our multicultural society, and should always be maintained and treasured.

2. ACADEMIC FACTORS:

In terms of academic factors, and because of their complexity, the teaching and learning of the content subjects in multicultural classrooms require a number of specifically defined strategies and/or activities. An attempt is made here to suggest some of the strategies and/or classroom activities which have been proven to work quite well with foreign-born students and particularly with Indochinese students.

2.1. Identification of the General and Specific Objectives of the Instruction

This can be done on the basis of the main concept and purposes of the lesson which should be summarized in short sentences and simple language. Knowing and systematizing the objectives and/or main concepts of the lesson beforehand will lessen the teaching and learning burden. It is certainly a good idea to plan time to present the summary of the objectives and/or main concepts at the beginning of the lesson and also at the end of the lesson as learning reinforcement techniques. Not only do these activities help facilitate

comprehension during the classroom instruction but they also help the student retain what has been learned much better.

2.2. Identification of Key Words

Key workds of the lesson must be identified, underlined and explained thoroughly because the understanding of these key vocabulary items makes it much easier for the student of limited English proficiency to comprehend the lesson. Key words can be technical such as "solution" (meaning "answer to a problem" as in Math, or "liquid" as in Chemistry) or content-loaded, for instance "revolution", "crisis" etc. These key words usually play an essential role in the content of the lesson. Furthermore, American textbooks often contain numerous abstract terms and concepts as well as high load concept words such as "gnu", "gneiss", "lorgnette" etc. which are not frequently used and very difficult to pronounce. On the contrary, one can come across descriptive terms which tend to play a not-very-significant role in terms of comprehension such as "azure" and "protruding" in "... a beautiful azure sky" and "... a high protruding peak." Even so, these terms require some efforts on the part of the student of limited English proficiency to understand their meanings. The teacher should not only explain the meanings of the above terms but also point out that the use of such descriptive terms serve to add unique stylistic flavor. The explanation and understanding of key words can be achieved in different ways:

1. The use of bilingual dictionary or glossary.
2. The use of concrete examples, illustrations and/or demonstrations.

3. The use of charts, graphs, maps, visuals, international symbols or signs, if applicable.
4. The use of vocabulary items or synonyms that the student has already learned. The teacher should avoid too technical or too many not-frequently used terms in his/her explanations as this tends to confuse and overburden the learner.
5. Paraphrasing technical and hard-too-understand terms.
6. Pronunication practice for recognition purposes.

2.3. Rewriting the Main Concepts and/or Purposes of the Lesson

If it is necessary, the main concepts and/or purposes of the lesson should be rewritten in simpler and more familiar language. This can be done by:

1. The use of short sentences and simple grammatical structures.
2. Careful use of word order.
3. The elimination of words or phrases which are used for intensifying or describing purposes and which do not greatly affect meaning.
4. The maximum use of vocabulary items that the student of limited English proficiency is already familiar with in order to explain main concepts or key words.

2.4. Preteaching and Preparation of the Instruction in Advance

This strategy will certainly facilitate the learning and understanding of the concepts or contents of the lesson. It also helps avoid frustration and discouragement on the part of the student of limited English

proficiency. Unlike his American born peers, this student has to overcome a number of obstacles:

1. His language limitation.
2. His educational and cultural background which does not seem to help him understand the concepts and/or lesson taught.
3. His slow reading speed due to his constant struggle with the English language in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics.
4. His misplacement due to his age.
5. His difficulties and problems in his effort to adjust to an alien society.

2.5 Capitalization of Past Learning and Experience

Since students have to utilize, and depend on, their past learning and experience for new learning and experience, maximum learning and rate of retaining can be achieved by clever capitalization on what they already know, have learned, or are familiar with. Their experience includes concepts and vocabulary items that they have had a chance to learn, and also all kinds of words and sentences that they have read and written. Moreover, this experience also includes what they have had an opportunity to see, feel, taste, hear and smell. Therefore, learning continuity or sequencing must be emphasized in planning and conducting instruction for maximum results. This means that new

concepts or ideas should be introduced or taught in a logical sequence with teacher-identified, reasonable, realistic, enriching and satisfying goals for each student. The teacher should begin from this strong and well-understood foundation that the Indochinese student is familiar with, such as lecture and note taking, dependency on visual perception for learning memorization, and the grammar-translation approach, to name a few. The above process requires a careful consideration of a number of variables such as the student's background and ability, teaching objectives and philosophies, and teaching practicality. By and large, the Indochinese student exhibits not only an extraordinary desire and capability to learn, he is also known for his disciplined behavior in the classroom, respect for the teacher, and high esteem for education. These factors alone can be utilized as an example for some of our American students for the benefit of the classroom, the school and the students themselves. Experience shows that in classrooms where there are a good number of well-disciplined and highly motivated students from Indochina or other Asian countries, non-Asian students tend to behave accordingly even in terms of educational efforts, performances and expectations. Furthermore, Indochinese students tend to treasure the opportunities to learn and to be productive and our great nation can only benefit from these cultural traits.

2.6. Extra Help in Taking and Organizing Classroom Notes

As explained in great detail in Section 1.1.1 entitled "Student's Back-

ground and Level", page 4, due to his limited English proficiency in all the four basic skills, the Indochinese student is forced to make tremendous and time consuming efforts to take notes and organize instructional and/or technical concepts based on these notes. The teacher of content subjects along with the ESL and/or bilingual teachers are recommended to give the student extra help in the two above areas. Without this extra help, his struggle with the instruction and related materials can be very tedious, uninteresting and frustrating. Assistance might also be needed regarding self-direction of time and self-evaluating materials that the Indochinese student is, generally speaking, not familiar with. The teacher can show him how these materials can be properly used and/or how they can be useful to the student. This process can be developed gradually and individually. In other words, the student should be trained in working by himself and independently. Eventually he will be able to do everything he can with given objectives, and get the teacher's explanatory assistance for what he is not able to do by himself. Gradually, independent study programs which require only some knowledge of English such as maths, science and art can be set up for him to best meet his social, psychological and emotional needs.

2.7. Flexibility

Flexibility on the part of the American teacher is crucial in guaranteeing a meaningful education and maximum learning rate for the student. Due to the student's background and multifaceted difficulties discussed in great detail above, the teacher's flexibility in terms of

expected performance and learning activities is not only necessary but is definitely a key factor to affective and effective teaching. Remember that a slow but steady progress is worth much more than a quick failure.

3. SOME USEFUL APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES

The teacher should consider the use of some or all of the following approaches and techniques which are suggested on the basis of the above analysis and the author's interviews with American teachers of content subjects and Indochinese students. Some of these interviews were conducted at Olney High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These approaches and techniques have been proven quite effective in teaching Indochinese students in particular, and students of limited English proficiency in general, in multicultural learning environments:

3.1. Individual Instruction: This approach is ideal in dealing with students of different backgrounds and levels because it is specifically tailored to meet the individual needs of these students and sets the appropriate rate of progress for everyone of them. This approach also provides due attention and follow-up for the student's academic achievements.

3.2 The "Buddy" System: This approach reportedly works extremely well in multicultural and multi-leveled classroom situations. It provides for encouragement of, and opportunity for, advanced students, particularly American-born students, to coach and tutor students of limited English proficiency in terms of language acquisition as well as the

learning of the content areas. It also promotes cultural and racial harmony in the classroom. Last but not least, it gives the teacher more time to help and work with slower students. It has been established that one of the reasons why this approach has been quite successful with Indochinese students is that due to his traditional respect for the teacher and humility trait, the Indochinese student usually does not feel comfortable when he asks the teacher questions or seeks information. Most students from Indochina have reportedly hesitated to ask their teachers questions in the classroom and particularly in front of their peers. This behavior can be explained by his deep-rooted cultural belief or traits which discourage him to ask the teacher questions because of the fear that such an act might be construed as a challenge to the teacher's knowledge which is traditionally considered to be "taboo". Furthermore, he also might be afraid of making a fool of himself when asking questions or seeking information. As a consequence, his "silent" presence and learning might very well be misinterpreted by the American teacher as "passive", "unmotivated", "lazy", "lacking in creativity and enthusiastic participation in the classroom", or in some extreme cases as "retarded".[1]

3.3 Reading Strategies for the Content Subjects: Among available reading techniques, the following can be very helpful and should be considered as part of a general strategy to teach the content subjects to students

[1] For a more detailed description of these cultural traits, see Getting to Know the Vietnamese and Their Culture by the author, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, New York, 1976, pp. 71-74 and pp. 82-83.

of limited English proficiency:

1. Skimming Technique: This technique is aimed at familiarizing the student with the format and/or presentation of the book. This includes the familiarization with the function of the Table of Contents, Index, location of charts, graphs, and maps. The student is also directed to read and understand the introduction, subtitiles, conclusions and/or summaries of chapters in order to be able to predict what might be expected, and develop other reading comprehension skills.

2. SQ3R Pattern:[1] This technique includes the following steps:

   S: Skim through the material and get a general idea of its organization and content. (Skimming)

   Q: Ask questions about the content as this is suggested by headings and subheadings. (Questioning)

   R: Read the material silently and look for answers to the anticipated content. (Reading)

   R: Recite to yourself in your own words what has been learned. (Reciting.)

   R: Review to make sure that answers to the questions are now known. (Reviewing.)

3. Scanning Technique: Faster than the skimming technique, this technique is used when something has to be found such as key words, main ideas or concepts etc., by inspecting or looking over quickly

1. For further understanding of this pattern, read Effective Study by Francis P. Robinson, Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, 1961.

the material to be studied. Scanning is a deliberately focussed and searching type of reading. Of course, spoken language cannot be scanned.

3.4 Reading Improvement in Content Areas: This can be achieved by:

- determining a reasonably accurate level of each student by formal evaluations.
- the selection of appropriate but differentiate reading materials according to the student's individual needs, interests and strengths.
- introducing unfamiliar vocabulary and/or concepts through first-hand or vicarious experiences in order to prepare the student for assigned reading activities.
- Additional help for the student who needs it in the area of the work-study skills.
- Follow-up activities according to the student's needs, interests and strengths.
- helping the student develop flexible reading rates for different purposes and with materials of varying levels of difficulty.
- using more than one source of reading such as multiple texts, multi-level texts, materials, pamphlets, etc.
- structured guides containing organized and well-structured questions to help slower students quickly locate answers or find information, and direct more advanced students either to the page or to the whole unit.
- asking questions based on vocabulary, facts and implications for

complete comprehension. Furthermore, the student should be encouraged to ask and answer questions aimed at creating functional or learning experiences related to the objectives and/or contents of the instruction. Not only does this help expand the student's knowledge of the subject but it also helps expand his English vocabulary.

3.5. Use of 3" x 5" Cards: The process of vocabulary build-up can be facilitated and controlled by the use of 3" x 5" index cards. When a new vocabulary item is introduced or taught the first time, it should be recorded on the top left-hand side of the card with its appropriate meaning(s) either in the student's native language or English or both. An example to show how this vocabulary is used will be given below along with its English synonym(s) and/or antonym(s), if appropriate. On the top right-hand side of the card, write the date when the new vocabulary is introduced the first time and its source right below. For example: suppose the term "element" is introduced the first time on page 70 of the book entitled Matter, Life and Energy by Wilmer B. Herron; Nelson P. Palmer and Paul H. Joslin and published by Meredith Corporation, 1972. The student can be shown to record it on the index card as follows:

Element: (science) Nguyên tô (Vietnamese) Substance which has not so far been split up into simpler form by ordinary chemical methods	12-4-79 Matter, Life and Energy, P.70
Example: Are all elements related to one another in some way? Scientists have tried to classify elements.	
Synonyms(s): Component, constituent, ingredient Antonym(s): Compound, composite	

By looking at this card the student understands the meaning of the term "element" right away and also knows how to use it in meaningful and accurate contexts. It tells him when the term was introduced and where it came from for quick reference. Other information related to the vocabulary can also be found on the card such as its synonym(s) and/or antonym(s), if available. These cards will then be classified alphabetically and eventually form a mini-dictionary or glossary for the student. The author's experience shows that the student of limited English proficiency, generally speaking, enjoys doing it and finds it very useful and exciting (because he is compiling his own dictionary!)

It should be remembered that it is very important for the student of limited English proficiency to learn sufficient English so that he can function successfully in content subject classes, and that learning sufficient English implies much more than just a knowledge of certain vocabulary and grammatical structures. It implies that the student is able to use these linguistic aspects to understand the instruction as well as to communicate effectively and follow directions. Of course, the content of instruction must be specified in terms of vocabulary and grammatical

structures. Vocabulary can be technical and non-technical. Technical vocabulary is item specific to the skill or knowledge such as "fission", "radioactivity", "satellite" "reactor" etc. Non-technical vocabulary consists of words which are used in technical and/or non-technical area, for examples: "big", "useful", "serve", etc.

3.6 Evaluation and Testing:

In the content areas, the student of limited English proficiency should be tested and evaluated to find out in a reasonably accurate manner:

- his English capability in the four basic skills: comprehension, speaking, reading and writing.[1]
- his previous knowledge and educatior
- his level.
- his needs and interests.[2]
- his achievement and progress in content subject classes.

The evaluation and testing can be done in writing or orally

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1. For criteria for testing the English language, read Content Area Instruction for Students with Limited English Proficiency developed by the Indochinese Center for Material Development and Training, Bilingual Education Service Center, Arlington Heights, Ill., 1979, p. 10.

2. For further information on this subject, read "Materials Development for Individualized Instruction in the Bilingual Classroom" by Myriam Met and Vuong G. Thuy, Proceedings of the Eighth Annual International Bilingual Bicultural Education Conference, National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, Rosslyn, Va., 1981, pp. 184-185.

or both. It should be born in mind that most tests and testing instruments available commercially are linguistically and culturally biased as far as the foreign-born student of limited English proficiency is concerned. Therefore, objective tests and other testing instruments must be selected carefully, and provisions to compensate for the above shortcoming are no doubt necessary. Moreover, in order to guarantee a reasonably accurate result, a combination of tests or testing and evaluating instruments should be used instead of single ones. When testing is conducted orally or when oral questions are asked, the teacher should try to avoid asking yes-no questions because the answer is almost always "yes" and rarely "no" regardless of the fact whether the student understands the question and/or the ilicited information. WH-questions should be asked instead. Furthermore, negative questions are very difficult for the student of limited English proficiency, particularly Asian students, to process and consume. Negative questions such as "Don't you want to come with us?", or "It is not raining, is it?", can lead to extremely confusing answers like "Yes, I don't want to come with you." or "Yes, it is not raining." One of the reasons for this kind of confusing answers is that there are lots of miscues in those questions themselves, and that the student tends to transfer or translate his linguistic habit in his own

language into the English language. Also, he tends to answer the questions in terms of their contents instead of forms. In the case of the question "It is not raining, is it?", for instance, "you" made the statement that it is not raining and then asked "me" if it is true or not, and "I" agree with you that "it is not raining", therefore, I say "yes" (agreement with "you" that "it is not raining.") Moreover, in a number of cultures in the world, particularly Asian cultures, the term "no" is generally considered "undesirable" because it tends to create some sort of confrontation while in these cultures "harmony" is definitely a cultural trait which is supposed to be valued, observed and maintained at all time and cost.[1]

In terms of the student's classroom achievement and progress, the evaluation should be conducted on a regular basis and in a well-structured manner. Every lesson has to be evaluated to determine to what extent the objectives have been met and if learning has in fact taken place. If the objectives were not met satisfactorily, the material must be retaught or reviewed. The result of the evaluation is crucial to the planning and implementation of a

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1. For further information on this cultural trait, read Getting to Know the Vietnamese and Their Culture by the author, Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, New York, New York, 1976, pp. 10-11.

meaningful and equitable education for the student in an efficient and effective way.

3.7. Coordination with Other Instructional Staff Members: The coordination between the teacher of the content areas and other instructional staff members in planning, implementation and evaluation of the instruction of the content areas is not only desirable but also necessary for a successful teaching and learning. The help and cooperation of important instructional staff members such as the ESL teacher, bilingual teacher, reading teacher, speech therapist etc. should be constantly sought before, during and after instruction.[2]

3.8. Help from Parents and Community Members: Help from parents and members of ethnic communities can also prove to be quite valuable for the teacher of the content areas.

IV. HUMAN FACTORS

In addition to all the factors examined in this paper, and as far as the teaching of the content areas is concerned, the most important factor of all for a successful teaching is a human one or the teacher's role. In other words, the teacher plays a key role in the multifaceted process of the teaching of the content areas to students of limited English proficiency. This task is certainly demanding and not an easy one. It requires a lot of patience, effort, understanding, tolerance,

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2. For the description of different types of coordination, read Content Area Instruction for Student of Limited English Proficiency developed by the Indochinese Center for Material Development and Training, Bilingual Education Service Center, Arlington Heights, Ill., 1979, p. 17.

flexibility and especially genuine interest in the education of these students on the part of the American teacher. Research has shown that if the teacher thinks or believes that the student can learn, this student will learn, and that if the teacher thinks or believes that the student cannot learn, he will not learn. Therefore, the teacher will make all the difference. There is no doubt that the teacher's task is challenging, however, this task can be quite rewarding if it is carried out with a human interest and care.

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